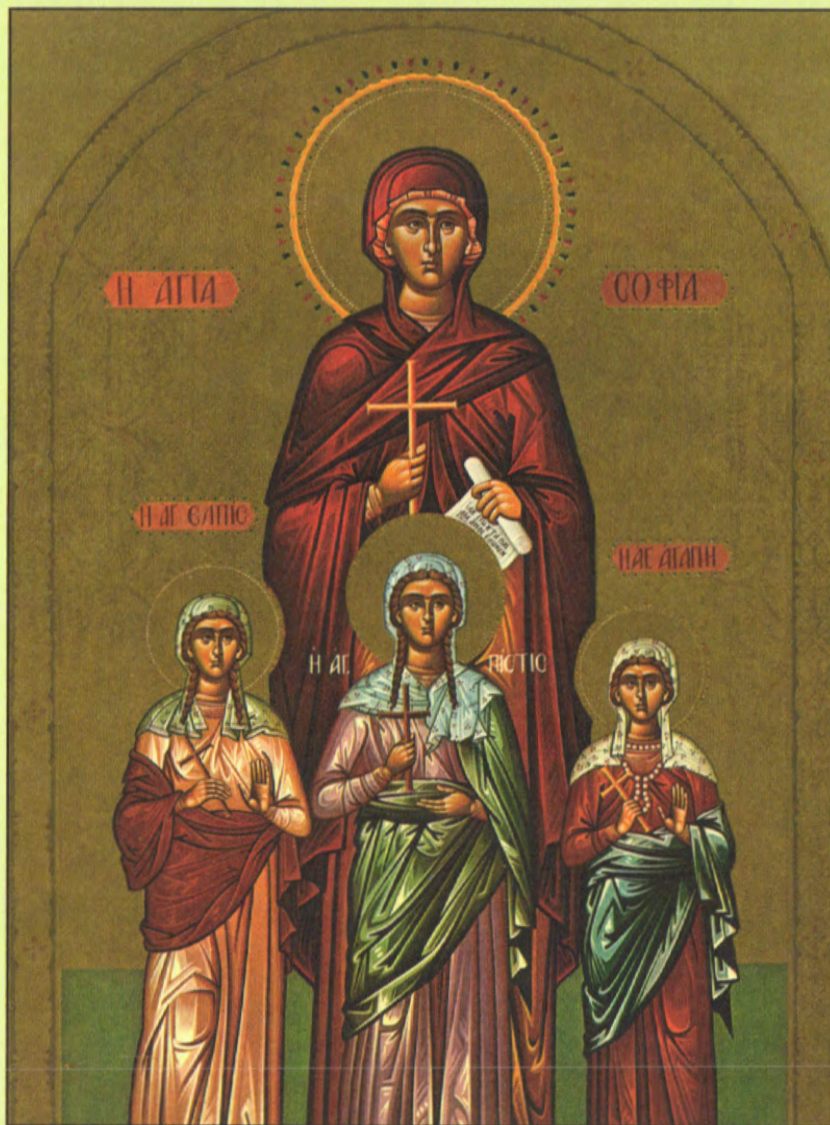


SUNDAY AFTER THE EXALTATION
OF THE HOLY CROSS



Icon of Saint Sophia and Her Children -- September 17th



September 17, 2017

SUNDAY AFTER THE EXALTATION OF THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS;
THE HOLY MARTYR SOPHIA AND HER THREE DAUGHTERS: FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

TONE 6

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR SEPTEMBER 18 – SEPTEMBER 24

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

Please Note: **NO Vespers this evening**

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 – SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTCOST;

THE HOLY PROTOMARTYR AND EQUAL-TO-THE-APOSTLES THECLA.

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

For All Parishioners

Services for Mary Kitt

Thursday, September 28

3:00 PM – Internment at Holy Cross Cemetery.

Saturday, September 30

11:00 AM – Parastas at St. John the Baptizer followed by memorial luncheon.

Роздуми від Владики Венедикта

У щоденних життєвих проблемах ми не раз можемо нарікати, що хтось нас роздратував, довів до злості, недобре з нами повівся, і саме тому ми так відреагували, згрішили у своєму серці чи супроти ближнього. Однак наша поведінка в критичних ситуаціях залежить від того, які ми всередині. Адже те, що носимо в серці, виявляється у вчинках.

Як «добре дерево не може родити поганого плоду», так і ми не можемо добре реагувати, коли не маємо того «добра» всередині. Якщо ми носимо у своїх серцях любов, лагідність і мир, то і з ближніми живемо в любові, лагідності й мирі. Якщо носимо у своєму серці злобу, неприязнь, гнів, образи, то це й поширюємо навколо себе. Деколи сподіваємося, що втаїмо це в собі, – можливо, але до якогось певного моменту. Коли настануть найважчі хвили життя, тоді буде видно, ким я є і що я ношу у своєму серці. Отож, дбаймо про чистоту свого серця!

A Reflection from Bishop BENEDICT

In life's daily trials, we often complain that someone has irritated us, brought us to anger, or behaved badly toward us, and because of the way we responded, we sin against our neighbor openly or in our hearts. However, in critical situations, our behavior depends on who we are inside. After all, what we carry in our hearts is manifested in actions.

As "a good tree cannot bear bad fruit," so we cannot respond well when we do not have that "good" inside. If we carry love, gentleness, and peace in our hearts, then we live with our neighbors in love, gentleness, and peace. If we carry malice, hostility, anger or insults in our hearts, then we spread them to those around us. Sometimes we hope to hide these thoughts within ourselves, perhaps, but only for a while. When the hardest waves of life come, then it will be clear who I am and what I carry in my heart. Therefore, care for the purity of your heart!

Fr. James will be away...

...through this Friday, 9/22 for the annual clergy retreat. In case of an emergency please contact Fr. Brian Escobedo of Holy Angels Byzantine Catholic Church at (858) 277-2511, or Fr. James Babcock at (714) 600-3660.

Parish Picnic

Mark your calendars:

Next Saturday September 23rd

11:00 AM at Crown Point Park, Mission Bay. Hamburgers, hotdogs, drinks. Activities for all. Bring your lawn chairs.

Cost: 10 years of age and younger \$5.00
11 and up - \$15.00

Проповідь в Неділю після Воздвиження

*В ім'я Отця, і Сина, і Святого Духа!
Слава Ісусу Христу!*

Дорогі у Христі браття і сестри, в сьогоднішньому євангельському читанні Господь говорить до нас про найголовніше, про той шлях, йти яким Він нас закликає.

Шлях Христа – єдиний шлях життя, тому що всі інші – людські. Люди багато дізналися, багато завоювали, подолали хвороби, проникли в далекі та важкодоступні місця, спускалися на дно моря і піднімалися високо над землею, але це не зробило життя кращим чи щасливішим.

І ми розуміємо, чому Господь говорить нам ці слова: «Яка користь людині, коли вона придбає весь світ, а душу свою занапастить?» (Мк. 8, 36). Поміркуймо про це: чого б людина не досягла, якщо її душа одночасно не збагачується, не стає шляхетнішою, не просвітлюється, – усе буде марно. І зараз ми це добре усвідомлюємо, дивлячись навколо себе, знаючи, що навіть матеріальний добробут не може зробити людей кращими. Потрібно, щоб дух оживотворявся Божою правдою – тоді людина буде щасливою.

Вже дві тисячі років, як Спаситель проголосив нам ці істини. Чому ж люди шукають правди в інших місцях і потім зазнають гіркої поразки? Чому досі могутня правда Євангелія ще так мало зробила в серцях людей і навіть в серцях віруючих людей? Тому що Господь, невидимо залишившись на землі, хоче, щоб вісниками Його святого Євангелія були учні, тобто ми з вами, люди, які носять на тілі хрест, називаються християнами. І тому Він говорить: «... хто визнає Мене перед людьми, того визнаю і Я перед Отцем Моїм Небесним» (Мт. 9, 32). І ще Господь говорить: «Так нехай сяє світло ваше перед людьми, щоб вони бачили ваші добрі діла і прославляли Отця вашого Небесного (Мт. 5, 16)».

Коли ми щиро й справедливо поставимось до себе, то побачимо, що саме в нас міститься причина того, що сила Євангелії не діє в світі так, як вона могла діяти, коли б ми були справжніми християнами, повними віри, сили духа, надії на Господа й любові до людей.

Світові цього ми не виявили, не показали й опинилися в тих же тенетах, в яких живе світ. Коли ми з вами приходимо на сповідь, ми, на жаль, сповідуємось у тих же гріхах, які властиві всім людям – цим ми виявляєм своє безсилля, свою неміч, свою ницість.

Передовсім Господь говорить: «Хто хоче йти за Мною, нехай зречеться себе, і візьми хрест свій, і за Мною йде» (Мк. 8, 34). Як важко людині відкинути себе, адже, навіть до Господа звертаючись, думаємо про те, щоб мати для себе вигоду. Якщо Його полюбити по-справжньому, наше життя буде іншим. «Візьми хрест свій», а хрест означає служіння, а не просто працю, скорботи і хвороби. Праця, скорботи, хвороби і в тварин бувають, але хрест несе тільки свідомо людина, яка трудиться в ім'я ближнього. «За Мною йде» – це означає навчитися жити в Господі.

І якщо сьогодні при світлі Євангелії ми самі вчинимо над собою суд, всі визнаємо, що ми є негідними та що стали перешкодою на шляху справи Божої. Визнаючи це з гіркотою, ми не повинні впадати у відчай, відчай, тому що той, хто вірує, хто молиться, хто любить людей – завжди відчуватиме присутність Божої благодаті. Навіть, якщо нас залишатимуть сили, є Той, Хто нам їх знову помножить.

Так будемо йти до кінця днів і коли пройдемо цей шлях, який тільки на початку здається страшним та важким, коли відчуємо Божу благодать, яка нас зміцнює тоді радісно й зі смиренням будемо нести хрест свій, знаючи, що цим відкриється для нас вхід до Царства Небесного. Амінь.

митр. прот. Василь Данильчик

THE TREE HEALS THE TREE

September 14, 2017 · Fr. Stephen Freeman

Readers of the New Testament are familiar with St. Paul's description of Christ as the "Second Adam." It is an example of the frequent Apostolic use of an allegoric reading of the Old Testament (I am using "allegory" in its broadest sense – including typology and other forms). Christ Himself had stated that He was the meaning of the Old Testament (John 5:39). Within the Gospels Christ identifies His own death and resurrection with the Prophet Jonah's journey in the belly of the fish. He likens His crucifixion to the serpent raised on a staff by which Moses healed the people of Israel. Without the allegorical use of the Old Testament – much of the material in the gospels and the rest of the New Testament would be unintelligible.

Orthodox Christians are very accustomed to this manner of handling Scripture – the hymnography (largely written during the Patristic period) of the Church's liturgical life is utterly permeated by such a use of allegory. The connections between New Testament and Old – between dogma and the allegory of Scriptural imagery is found in almost every verse offered within a service. Those who are not familiar with the Eastern liturgical life are unaware of this rich Christian heritage and of its deep doctrinal piety and significance.

In the Feast of the Holy Cross, the hymnography at one point makes the statement, "The Tree heals the Tree." It is one of the marvelous commentaries on the life of grace and its relationship to the human predicament. It refers to the relationship between the Cross of Christ and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The latter was the source of the

fruit that Adam and Eve consumed that was the source of their fall from grace. The "Tree that heals" is none other than the Cross of Christ.

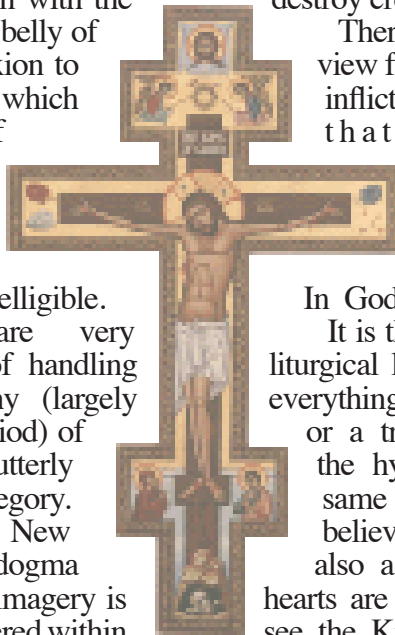
I am struck particularly by this treatment of Biblical imagery. The meditation does not say that the Cross *destroys* the tree whose fruit, along with our disobedience, brought the human tragedy. The Tree *heals* the Tree. In the same manner, the Kingdom of God does not destroy creation – it makes it whole.

There is a tendency within our lives to view failure and disasters (whether self-inflicted or otherwise) as deep tragedies that derail our lives and the world around us. Our heart becomes confused when the thought of "if only" takes up residence. But the Tree heals the Tree.

In God, nothing is wasted.

It is the spiritual habit of the Church's liturgical life to see the story of Christ in everything. Every story involving wood or a tree seems to find its way into the hymnography of the Cross. The same is true for many other images. I believe this way of reading Scripture is also a key to the Christian life. Our hearts are such that they generally do not see the Kingdom of God – we see only the tree and our disobedience. But Christ Himself became sin that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). He took our life upon Himself that He might bestow His own life upon us. Thus Christ has entered all things that He might make all things new. Nothing is wasted.

– Fr. Stephen Freeman



Reading by the Light of Christ

June 28, 2016 · Fr. Stephen Freeman

Let us suppose that you have heard the story of Jesus, in a fairly bare form, nothing like as complete as any of the gospels – just a general outline. And then let us suppose that the only Scriptures you have access to are the Old Testament. You have never seen a New Testament and do not have its phrases in your mind. And then let us suppose that you sit down to read the Old Testament for the purpose of finding Christ within its pages. How far do you think you'd get? Something like this was the task that confronted the primitive Church and the Apostles. Or at least we can posit such a thing.

So, we may ask, how do you get from such a situation to the full-blown midrash that is the New Testament? By that, I mean, a writing whose use of the Old Testament is presupposed at every turn, but nowhere follows a truly rational, discursive path through those writings. Mind you, the writings that comprise the Old Testament are little help, in and of themselves. They are a disparate collection of primal stories, histories, and poetry ranging over a period in excess of a 1,000 years, spanning a number of cultures.

Anyone who today suggests that we should read the Scriptures in a “rational” manner is ignoring almost the entire process that is actually at work when a Christian reads the Old Testament. For example, nowhere in the Old Testament is there an overall scope of the expectations concerning a coming Messiah. There is no narrative within the Old Testament of what a Messiah will do or accomplish.

The early Christian reading of the Old Testament (of which the New Testament is our prime example) is, in fact, a strange assemblage of frequently unrelated verses and passages whose Christian usage is often quite independent of their contextual meaning.

Contemporary Christians never come to the Old Testament in the manner of the writers of the New. We cannot approach many of the passages in Isaiah, for example, without hearing the strains of Handel's Messiah.

We are the heirs of 2,000 years of Christian appropriation of the Old Testament. We often fail to recognize how remarkable our usage is.

I do not write any of this to suggest a problem with how the New Testament handles the Old. I accept the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament as a foundational part of the faith. It is affirmed in the Creed: “According to the Scriptures.”

Think for a minute about that phrase. It is stated, “...who on the third day rose again from the dead in accordance with the Scriptures...” (1 Cor. 15:4). To what Scripture is St. Paul alluding when he says “on the third day?” I should quickly add that St. Paul is here quoting what he calls a “tradition.” It is clearly a primitive form of what would be called the Apostles' Creed. But what Scripture?

The only place in the Old Testament that hints at such a thing is the three days of Jonah in the belly of the whale. But that reference is in no way obvious. It could indeed have been treated as incidental to the story. But we hear Christ in the gospels referencing the “sign of Jonah” and predicting His three-day burial and resurrection. And this is my point. The New Testament only reads the Old in a Christian manner, because that manner was handed down to the Apostles by Christ Himself.

Another example is Christ as the Paschal Lamb. St. Paul says, “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us,” but there is nothing within the Passover story as it stands in the Old Testament that suggests that it is a type of the Messiah's deliverance of God's people. The same can be said of the Messiah as a sacrifice. Indeed, the primary focus of what little Old Testament interest there is in a coming Messiah seems to be primarily directed towards a political manifestation. That was precisely the character of the other “false Messiahs” who came and went near the time of Christ.

But the Christian reading of the Old Testament is something new on the scene of Judaism. In a very short order (cf. 1 Cor. 15 and the “Creed” embedded there), there is a clear hermeneutic

of the Old Testament that bears all of the outlines that direct the thoughts found within the New Testament writings. And those thoughts shaped the narratives of the gospels and everything else that came afterward.

I believe that it is historically absurd to suggest that such a narrative has any source other than Christ Himself (as the gospels themselves suggest). How the Church reads the Old Testament shows no particular signs of evolution or development. Instead, it seems to burst forth in full bloom. The “in accordance with the Scriptures” is itself one of the proofs of the resurrection.

But that reading of the Scriptures was not arrived at by a rational, systematic approach. It was revelatory, apocalyptic, and sudden. And this is very much what the gospels themselves say. When Christ appears to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who are clearly troubled and discussing the events and rumors of the resurrection, He says:

“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His

glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

This is the origin of the Paschal narrative, the peculiar way of reading the Old Testament that marks the Christian faith.

But this is where I want to press a further point. How is it that those who demand a rational/literal approach to the Scriptures fail to see its incongruity? The Christian faith reads the Scriptures (OT) under the direction of a Tradition that was given by Christ. And it can only read in that manner if it reads faithfully. By the same token, the work of the historical critics is an interesting artifact of our modern times, but it has nothing to say to a Christian hermeneutic that has always read the Scriptures in accordance with the resurrection and not in accordance with history. Whatever the origins and intentions of that collection of writings (the Old Testament) may have been, they are now and forever exalted into the Scriptures of the New by the resurrection.

We call ourselves believers because, as it seems to us, we believe in God; we go to church; go to confession; receive Holy Communion and pray. But when we look attentively at our daily lives, at our daily obligations where our faith should manifest itself, it becomes clear, how little we live in God. We make decisions on the basis of our human experience and ability, on our manner of approaching situations, and on our criteria. We do not have a deep understanding, that Christ – that He is the fountain of life, that in Christ is life eternal.

We need to uncover for ourselves and come to understand, that Christ the Lord – Alfa and Omega, which means the beginning and the end of everything, and that it is precisely in Him that we attain fullness in everything. Therefore the answer to every question; the beginning and end of our life; is always and forever to search for God, to be with God and to act in God

+ BENEDICT (Aleksiychuk)

The Holy Martyrs Vera, Nadia and Lyubov (Faith, Hope and Love) and their Mother Sophia (Wisdom)

They all lived and suffered in Rome during the reign of Emperor Hadrian. Sophia was wise, as her name implies. She was left a widow, and had established herself and her daughters well in the Christian Faith. When the persecuting hand of Hadrian extended even over the virtuous home of Sophia, Vera was only twelve years old; Nadia, ten years old; and Lyubov, nine years old. Brought before the emperor, these four held each other's hands "like a woven wreath," humbly but steadfastly confessed their faith in Christ the Lord and refused to offer sacrifices to the pagan idol Artemis. Before their suffering, the mother encouraged her daughters to endure to the end: "Your heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, is eternal health, inexpressible beauty and eternal life. When your bodies are slain by torture, He will clothe you in incorruption and the wounds on your bodies will shine in the heavens as stars." One by one the torturers inflicted cruel torments, first on Vera, then on Nadia, and then on Lyubov. They beat them, slashed them, cast them into fire and boiling pitch, and finally beheaded them with the sword one after another. Sophia took the dead bodies of her daughters outside the town and honorably buried them. She remained at their grave for three days and three nights, praying to God. Then she gave her spirit to God, flying off to Paradise, where the blessed souls of her glorious daughters awaited her.

Sunday offering for August 27

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$10.00	1
\$15.00	1
\$20.00	2
\$23.00	1 (loose)
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	2
\$80.00	1
\$100.00	1
\$105.00	1
\$400.00	1
<hr/>	
\$753.00	

Parishioner Total: \$733.00
Visitor Total: \$10.00

Average / parish household (43): \$9.40
Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2200.00

Deficit: <\$1467.00>

Sunday offering for September 3

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$20.00	2
\$25.00	2
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	1
\$69.00	1 (loose)
\$70.00	1
\$75.00	1
\$100.00	1
\$105.00	1
\$300.00	1
<hr/>	
\$944.00	

Parishioner Total: \$919.00
Visitor Total: \$25.00

Average / parish household (43): \$11.78
Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2200.00

Deficit: <\$1281.00>

Sunday offering for September 10

Amount	Number
\$10.00	1
\$14.00	1 (loose)
\$15.00	1
\$20.00	3
\$25.00	1
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	3
\$50.00	1
\$75.00	1
\$90.00	1
\$120.00	1
\$160.00	1
<hr/>	
\$769.00	

Parishioner Total: \$769.00

Average / parish household (43): \$9.86
Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2200.00

Deficit: <\$1431.00>



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква
Святого Йоана Хрестителя
St. John the Baptizer
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

4400 Palm Avenue
La Mesa, CA 91941
Parish Office: (619) 697-5085

Website: stjohnthebaptizer.org

Pastor: Fr. James Bankston
frjames@mac.com
Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

Love Lightens the Load

"If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and come after me." Our Lord's command seems hard and heavy, that anyone who wants to follow Him must renounce himself. But no command is hard and heavy when it comes from one who helps to carry it out. That other saying of His is true: "My yoke is easy and my burden light." Whatever is hard in His commands is made easy by love.

We know what great things love can accomplish, even though it is often base and sensual. We know what hardships people have endured, what intolerable indignities they have borne to attain the object of their love. What we love indicates the sort of people we are, and therefore making a decision about this should be our one concern in choosing a way of life. Why be surprised if people who set their hearts on Christ and want to follow Him renounce themselves

out of love? If we lose ourselves through self-love we must surely find ourselves through self-renunciation.

Who would not wish to follow Christ to supreme happiness, perfect peace, and lasting security? We shall do well to follow Him there, but we need to know the way. The Lord Jesus had not yet risen from the dead when He gave this invitation. His passion was still before Him; He had still to endure the cross, to face outrages, reproaches, scourging; to be pierced by thorns, wounded, insulted, taunted and put to death. The road seems rough, you draw back, you do not want to follow Christ. Follow Him just the same. The road we made for ourselves is rough, but Christ has leveled it by passing over it Himself.

St. Augustine of Hippo

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